

from The Cricket in Times Square
by George Selden

Mama and Papa Bellini came up the stairs from the lower level of the station. Mama was a short woman—a little stouter than she liked to admit—who wheezed and got a red face when she had to climb steps. . . . Mario was so busy feeding his cricket that he didn't see them when they came up to the newsstand.

"So?" said Mama, craning over the counter. "What now?"

"I found a cricket!" Mario exclaimed. He picked the insect up very gently between his thumb and forefinger and held him out for his parents to see.

Mama studied the little black creature carefully. "It's a bug," she pronounced finally. "Throw it away."

Mario's happiness fell in ruins. "No, Mama," he said anxiously. "It's a special kind of bug. Crickets are good luck."

"Good luck, ay?" Mama's voice had a way of sounding very dry when she didn't believe something. "Cricketers are good luck—so I suppose ants are better luck. And cockroaches are the best luck of all. Throw it away."

"Please, Mama, I want to keep him for a pet."